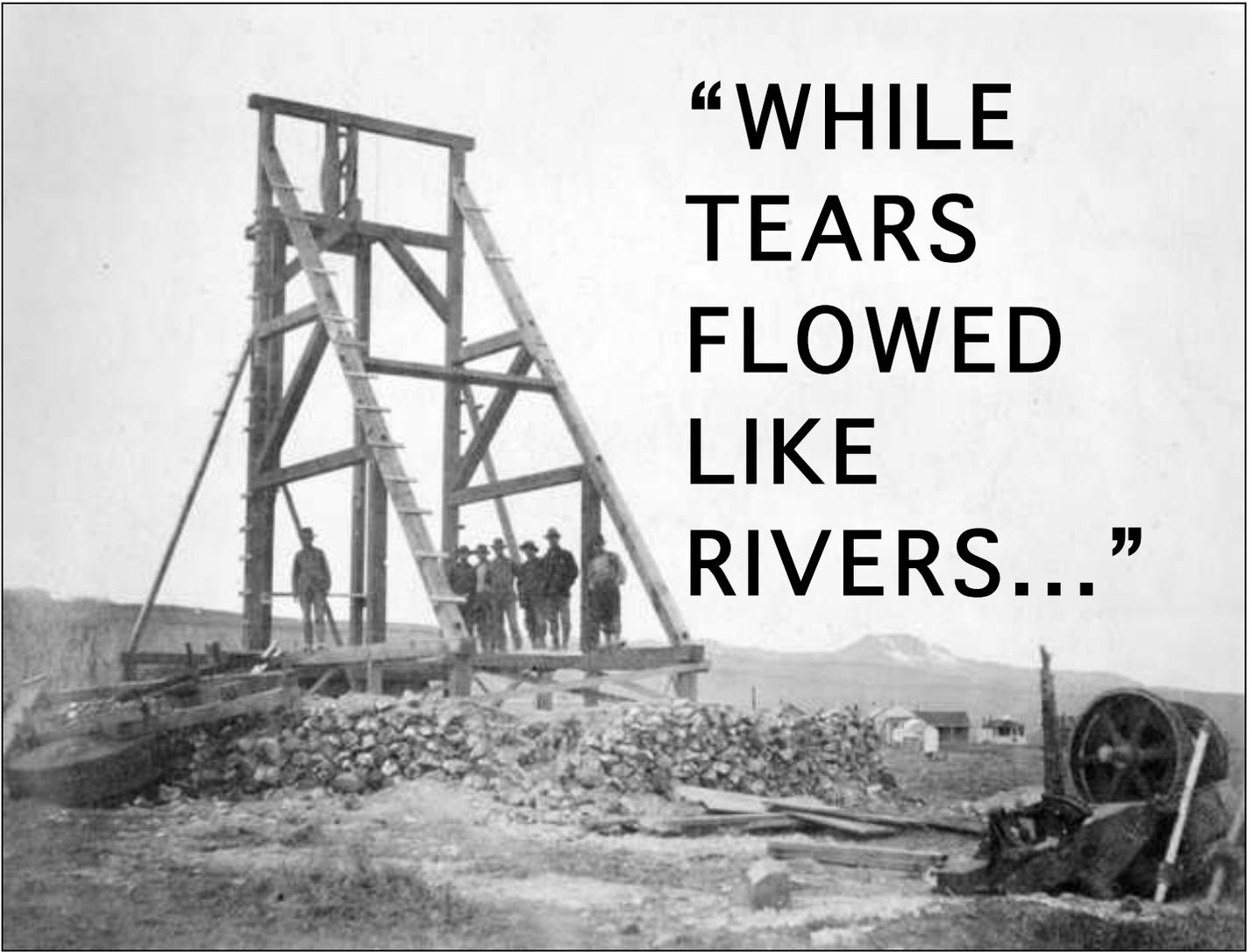


“WHILE TEARS FLOWED LIKE RIVERS...”



By FRANK CRAMPTON
Excerpted from the book *Deep Enough*
Printed in 1956

[Frank Crampton went west to seek adventure back in 1903. While in Cripple Creek, Colorado, Frank was taught how to do the job of a hard rock “stiff” by two experienced miners, John T, and Sully. Years later, Frank encounters his two old friends working on a mine in Nevada. It would be the last day all three of them were ever together.]

We made the Piute [Mine] an hour before lunch, and the shift was in the hole. So was Sully. The hoistman let us down to the hundred-fifty, where he thought we would find Sully. We looked around and finally came to where he was working up a raise in a stope, cleaning out a missed hole and getting it ready to reload.

Sully went down the raise with us and took us to the two-hundred, where a two-foot-wide high-grade ore shoot had been broken into the day before. Just before tally, we went up the shaft, and Sully went back to his cleaning-reloading chore. Sully wanted to get the shot fired so that the face could be drilled and shot on the afternoon half of the shift.

We were at the table eating lunch when we felt the ground shake and heard a dull boom underground. Sully had shot the hole and would soon be up. We went on eating, but when Sully did not show up, John T and I left the table, went to Sully's tent, found no Sully, and then to the collar of the shaft. There was still no sign of Sully nor any sound of his coming up the ladderway, so we went down.



An antique metal cleaning spoon used to clean the dust and debris out of a drilled hole so the sticks of powder could be tamped down.

Sully was in the stope, the pointed end of a metal cleaning spoon driven deep into his left chest, and his face torn by rock from the blasted hole. John T went for a piece of lagging, and when he returned with it, we fastened Sully to it and lowered him through the raise to the level below. We trammed him to the station and rang the accident bell signal. We waited a few minutes before we heard the hoist start, followed by sounds of men coming down the ladderway.

When we heard the hoist we signaled for the bucket. After it stopped at the station, we lifted Sully into it and put our arms around him to hold him tight to the cable so that he would not fall out. We signaled to hoist and were on our way up the shaft before the stiffs on the way down the ladderway reached the station.

We would not let any of the stiffs help take Sully from the bucket, nor help carry him to his tent house. We wanted to be alone with him until we laid him in his resting place. Pete, who understood the ties that bound Sully, John T, and me together, kept the stiffs away and left us alone.

John T and I had not spoken from the time we left the cook house to go after Sully. When we had laid him on his bed, we sat with him, one on either side. We once in a while said something to Sully, while tears flowed like rivers. While we were with Sully, Pete had the stiffs dig a grave on a little rise not far from camp, and make a coffin from the best mine lagging they could find.

When we left the tent, Pete was sitting outside, and the other stiffs not far from him. Not a few had tears that they could not stop. The others held the tears back. Pete got to his feet and motioned to the coffin he and the stiffs had made. John T and I carried it into the tent house, carefully wrapped Sully's bedroll around him, and laid him in it; then we closed the coffin and nailed down the lid. We knelt beside Sully and asked the Lord to be good to him. After that we went to the door, and the stiffs came in and carried him to his grave.

Before Sully was lowered, Peter read the Twenty-third Psalm, and we all said the Lord's Prayer. As the earth was mucked into Sully's grave, over rocks that would keep coyotes out of it, the trio that had left Chicago together more than ten years earlier was no more.